

# TREATISE

## *Librif* OF *Biblioth* *Rb* Ruling Elders

## *Theol.* & *Dmb.* Deacons.

In which, these things which belong to the understanding of their office and duty, are clearly and shortly set down

By a Minister of the Church of  
**SCOTLAND.**

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Revised and Published by Order of the General Meeting  
of the Ministers and Elders of this CHURCH

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1 Tim. 5. 17. Let the Elders that rule well, be counted  
worthy of double honour.

Tim. 3. 13. They that have used the office of a Deacon,  
well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great bold-  
ness in the faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

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## The Preface.

**T**He LORD, whose  
fire is in Zion. and  
whose furnace is  
in Jerusalem, *hath in depths*  
*of his wisdom* spoken by ter-  
rible things in righteous-  
ness *against this Nation*, he  
*hath* brought us down  
wonderfully, *and hath made*  
our breach wide as the Sea,  
who can heal us? our bruise  
is incurable, and our  
wound is grievous, *for the*  
Lord hath wounded us  
with the wound of an Ene-  
my, with the chastisement  
of a cruel one, because our  
sins

Isa. 31. 9.  
Psal. 65. 5.  
Lam. I. 9.  
Lam. 2. 13.  
Jer. 30. 12, 14.  
Isa. 19. 14.

A 2

## The Preface.

Isa. 9. 20.

Lam. 1. 14.

Lam. 2. 1.

Is. 59. 10.

sins were encreasead, he  
hath mingled a perverse  
spirit in the midst of us  
which causeth us to erre  
in every work, as a drunk-  
en man staggereth in his  
vomit; and we eat every  
man the flesh of his own  
arm, for all this his anger  
is not turned away, but  
his hand is stretched out  
still, the yoke of our trans-  
gressions is bound by his  
hand, they are wreathed,  
and come up upon our  
neck, and in the day of  
our calamity, he hath co-  
vered us with a cloud in  
his anger, that like blind  
men in the dark we grope  
for the wall, and cannot find  
either our sin or our duty:  
some



## The Preface.

5

Some cry, that there be many  
of our Prophets who have Lam. 2. 14  
not discovered our iniquity to turn  
away our captivity: others complain  
that not a few of them, have seen for  
us false burdens and causes of  
banishment, what shall we do whilst  
it's thus with us? surely it is  
meet to be said unto God, Job 10. 2.  
shew me why thou con- Job 34.  
tendest with me, I have 31. 32.  
born Chastisement, I will not of-  
fend any more, that which I see not,  
teach thou me, if I have done ini-  
quity, I will do no more;  
untill the Lord shall re- Jer. 9. 12.  
veal it unto us. and make us wise in  
heart to understand this, and speak  
to us, that we may declare it, for  
what the Land mourns, It is fit that  
in the things of the Lord's controversie  
and of our duty whereto we have al-

already attained, we walk by the same rule, & mind the same things. I do suppose that all of us are of one mind in this that our corrupt mixture in Church members, and Church officers, are one main cause, why so much wrath is gone forth from the Lord against us, and doth abide upon us. The Lord's design upon Scotland for a long time past seems to have been to purge

Ezek. 24. 13.

Isa. 1. 25.

Ezek. 20. 38.

Zeph. 3. 9.

his house, and as to have his ordinances pure, so to have his people and his Officers also pure; I mean not of a higher pitch than the doctrine and police of our Church doth reach, because ( I fear not to say it ) the measuring line of the Sanctuary hath been stretched over these, to give unto them due Scripture dimensions, concerning the qualification of Church members, and

*and Church Officers: If in these things  
 our practice were agreeable to our rule,  
 we need not be ashamed, but might  
 speak with our enemies in the gate,  
 and answer him that reproacheth us,  
 our sin is, that being weighed in our  
 own ballance, we are found too light;  
 how many Churchmembers are there in  
 Sco land, whom our Church disci-  
 pline (if conscientiously weilded) would  
 cutt off as Rotten, How many Church-  
 Officers, whom that discipline would cast  
 out as unsavory salt we  
 have rejoyced in our Zeph. 3. 21.  
 pride, and been haughty  
 because of the Lord's holy moun-  
 tain, but have not so zealously cared,  
 that holiness to the Lord  
 might be engraven in all Zech. 14.  
20. 21.  
 the pots of his house, We  
 have boasted of a Reformation of the  
 Ordinances, without seeking as really  
 to*

to reform Church-Members, according to the Pattern thereof. Pure Ordinances are indeed things precious and excellent, (and what soul among us that hath any measure of the true Zeal of the Lords house, can behold the defacing of these, and not make it the matter of their lamentation) yet these are but means subordinate to a more high and super-excellent end, to wit, that we may thereby be brought with open face to behold as in a glass the

2 Cor. 3. 18.

glory of the Lord, and and be changed unto the same Image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord, that we may all come un-

Ephes. 4. 13.

to the unity of the faith, unto the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is true that  
all

## The Preface.

9

all the Members of the Church visible,  
will not be living and live-  
ly stones in the Lords tem- Mat. 20 16.  
ple, neither doth the rule of  
Church-constitution, hold out, or cast  
out all who are not really such; but  
this is the great scope that all of us  
ought to levell at, that all the Lords  
people may be holy that all  
who profess faith in Jesus Psal. 93. 5.  
Christ, may walk as be- Phil. 1. 27.  
comes the Gospel of Jesus  
Christ. and how shall this be attain-  
ed unless these who bears the Vessels  
of the Lord, and to whom the charge  
of holy things be committed, be holy,  
the sons of Levi must be  
purified and purged as Mal, 3. 3.  
gold and as silver, before  
they offer unto unto the Lord an offer-  
ing in righteousness, when that is  
done, then are the offerings of Judah  
and

and Jerusalem pleasant unto the Lord. I acknowledge that we were once upon a fair way for purging the House of God in this Land, they who interrupted us shall bear their burden; but what was done in this thing, was not more refreshing to gracious hearts, than it was sorely repined at, and opposed by others ( a sin that provoked the Lord to stop the current of so rich a mercy ) therefore do many make haste again to intrude themselves upon the Congregations whence they were once justly cast out, and not a few amongst the People love to have it so, as though there were a conspiracy to return to Egypt, and to build again the walls of Jericho, and repair the ruines of Edom. I do also acknowledge it with thankfulness unto the great Shepherd of Souls, that there is a great company of gracious men amongst the Officers

## The Preface.

11

the officers of his Church, who walk in the ways of the Lord, and keep his charge, but there be also many that neither do so, nor know how to do it; to say nothing of Ministers: It is more than manifest that there is a generation of ignorant, slothfull, earthly minded men, who bear the name of Elders and Deacons in many Congregations, and where such bear rule, what can be expected, but that the People should perish for want of knowledge, and holiness be despised, and ly in the dust, and Congregations still abide into swarthy a temper, if we might find grace in the Lords sight, to be thoroughly convinced of this great Chureh evil; whence many Church evils flow. and be brought with some measure of sincerity to endeavour the  
remedy

remedy thereof, what a branch of hope might it be, that our reproach should be taken away and we become a people instructed in the way of the Lord, and walking to the Praise and Commendation of the Gospel, which is now evil spoken of, because of the ignorance, and loose conversation of many among us: Therefore am I bold as pressed in spirit (albeit one of the weakest and most unworthy) to offer this little Treatise, with an eye upon this end. And let me without offence, beseech all the Ministers, Elders, Deacons, Congregations, Presbyteries, and Assemblies of this Church, in the bowels of the Lord Jesus Christ: yea, let me obtest them by the blood of the everlasting Covenant, by their Zeal of the Lord's honour, by the credit of the Gospel, by their love to souls, and by the fury



The Preface.

13

fury of the Lord, which he hath caused to rest upon us, because he purged us, and we would not be purged; *and as they desire, the Lord should bring us again, and* Ezra. 9. 8, *cause us stand before him, and leave us a remnant, and give us a nail in his holy place; that they would each of them in their stations, endeavour to take forth the precious from the vile,* Jer. 15. 19. *and purge the Lord's house in this Land from corrupt Officers, and corrupt members; Oh, will we not be made* Jer. 13. 27. *clean; When will it once be?*

B

TO

TO THE  
*Christian Reader.*

**T**He inducements that perswaded me first to write, and then to publish this little Treatise of Ruling Elders and Deacons, were chiefly these, 1. The sensible Impression that the Lord hath made upon my Spirit, as also ( I know ) upon the spirits of the godly of the Land, of the great prejudice that comes to this poor Church by a multitude of men in these offices, who neither know their duty, nor make conscience to perform it. 2 The vindicating the Doctrine of our Church concerning these Church-Officers,

Officers, that the mouths of such who speak evil may be stopped, and others who stumble may be satisfied. 3. The pressing desire of Brethren, Ministers, and Elders in the Presbytery and Congregation, where the Lord hath set me; all which did receive some spirit and life, when I found my name among those to whom the Gen. Assembly of this Church did commit and recommend this work long agoe.

I have endeavoured to handle it with as much plainness and evidence of Truth, and as shortly, without wronging of the matter as I could: It is not unlike that some may think, that I have done no great business, because I have brought no new thing. I acknowledge that it is so; what I have said, is for the matter (I trust) and in many things for the words too, the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and of Protestant

Divines, and of our Church, in the Acts and Policy thereof; I have but put together in one, and digested into some Method what was lying scattered of before, that these who either could not, or would not be at the pains to search for such things, may now have them at their hand. Others may look upon this Treatise as not plain enough, or as not so exact, full, and perfect as it ought to be; with these I shall not contend; I have done what I could, at least what I conceived best in order to the ends I propounded to myself; If others shall find favour of the Lord to do better, I shall bless his Name on their behalf, and receive and make use of their pains with thankfulness, And some may happily think, that there is here too much laid upon Ruling-Elders, more nor they shall be able or willing to undertake; yea, more than the

the Lord doth require of them, most of the things that are mentioned by us being incumbent to Ministers rather than to Elders. It is true what is said of the Elders duty, is also the duty of Ministers, for whatsoever the Elder ought to do by vertue of his calling, that also ought the Minister to do, and somewhat more, but so far as we know, nothing is spoken here of the Elder, that doth not belong to him, if through ignorance or want of abilitie, or neglect, or custome, Elders have not done these things, it is that which ought to be helped, it is now high time for them to awake, and to know and owne, and follow their duty; and for the Church of God in Scotland, to know how much she hath smarted under the hands of ignorant and slothful, yea and scandalous men; we would not alwayes satisfie our selves with

with disguised & histrionical men,  
 puffed up with Titles or  
 with Idols, dead in sins to  
 be Elders; but would

It nius Ec-  
 cles. 1. 2. C. 2.

seek after holy men, who being  
 endued with faith in God, and  
 walking in his obedience, God  
 authorizing them, and the Church  
 his Spouse choising them, and call-  
 ing them, undertake the Govern-  
 ment thereof, that they may labour  
 to the conservation and Edification  
 of the same in Christ; *neither needs  
 the qualification, or multitude, or diffi-  
 culties of the particulars here spoken of,  
 discourage or scarre any: It is not so-  
 much the measure as the truth of the  
 thing that is to be looked at. We have  
 set down what a Ruling-Elder ought  
 to be, in Regard of the whole extent of  
 his Charge, sundry particulars where-  
 of the most part of Ruling-Elders are  
 selldome*

## To the Reader.

19

men, seldom called to exercise, and if they  
be in some measure fitted for these parts  
of the charge which God calls them to  
exercise, and follow the same with single-  
ness of heart, that they may believe that  
they shall be assisted, and accepted of  
God in Jesus Christ; the Imployment  
is not theirs, but the Lords; from  
whom they may expect both their furni-  
ture, and also their reward; let them  
arise and be doing, and the Lord shall  
be with them.

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A

( 20 )

A Short

# T R E A T I S E

O F

## Ruling Elders.

CHAP. I.

*of their Names.*

**W**Hat is necessary to be understood concerning Ruling Elders may be taken up in the explication of these four, 1. Their name, 2. Their institution. 3. Their Calling 4. Their Qualification. and Duty.

*The book of  
Disc. c. 6 St.*

*Assert.: of the  
Government*

*of the Ch. of  
Scotland. I.*

*part. cap. I.*

*1. Tim. 5. 1.*

The word Elder in the Scripture doth signifie divers things, 1 It signifieth old men, or men come to age : 1 Tim. 5. 1. *Rebuke not an Elder, but intreat him as a father, and the younger*

*men*



men as brethren. 2. It signifies those who have lived in the times of

old *Mat. 15. 2. Why doth* *Mat. 15. 2*

*Disciples transgress the tradition*

*of the Elders.* 3. It is taken for honourable and worthy men, *Isa. 3. 2. The Lord*

*of Hosts doth take away from Jerusalem and*

*Judah the Prudent and the Ancients.* 4. It

is the name of a Spritual Officer in the house of God. *Acts 14. 23. And when*

*they had ordained them El-*

*ders in every city.* In this last *Acts. 14. 23.*

signification it is taken in this

place, for these who bear Rule in the

House of God, who are called Elders

because of the Knowledge, Gifts. Expe-

rience, Prudence, and Gravity where-

with they ought to be indued. The Offi-

cers in the House of God, who in

the Scriptures are called by *The 2. book of*

the name of Elders, are of *Discipline*

several sorts, *ch: 6. lect. 1.* Preaching

Elders or Ministers, Teaching Elders

or Doctors, and Ruling or Governing El-

ders

ders, all these three are oftentimes in the N. T. comprized under the general name of Elder *Act* 15. 6, 22. & 20 17. 1 *Pet.* 5. It

is the Ruling Elder whom

*Act* 15. 6. 22. we have now to do with,

and 20 17 who is so called, not because

1 *Pet.* 5. the power of ruling and go-

*The 2. book of* governing the Church be-

*Disc.* C. 6. §. 3. longs to him alone, for it

also belongs to the Preaching and Teach-

ing Elders. or to the Ministers and Do-

ctors: But because to rule and govern is

the principal and chief part of his Charge

and Employment, it is the highest Act of

his Office; It is not competent for him

to Preach, that belongs to the Pastor or

Minister, nor to teach, that belongs to

the Doctor: but his Office is comprized

within the compasse of Ruling and Go-

verning the Church; and therefore he

is called the Governing or Ruling Elder;

The Apostle in the Epistle

*Rom.* 12. 8. to the *Rom.*: ch. 12. 8. call-

eth him; *him that ruleth, and*

1. Cor- 12. 28. he calls

Cor. 12. 28. 1 them *Governments* putting  
the Abstract for the

concret, Governments for Governours:  
Thus then we have the proper or right  
name of these Church Officers, which  
serve to correct a twofold mistake. The  
1. is, of these who either out of igno-  
rance, or disdain. do call them Lay El-  
ders, as if they were a part of the People  
only, and not to be reckoned amongst  
the Officers of the Lords House, whom  
the Popish Church in their pride, and  
others following them calls the Clergy,  
that is, the Lords Inheritance, in oppo-  
sition to the Laity or People, whom  
they look upon, as base and much inferi-  
or to the other in worth and Excellency,  
whereas all the Lords People are his  
portion, *and the lot of his Inheritance,*  
*Deut. 32. 9. 1, Pet. 5. 3.* The second  
mistake is, of these who do call these only  
Ruling-Elders, who sit in Presbyteries,  
Synods, and General Assemblies, allow-  
ing

ing to others the name of Elders, but not of Ruling-Elders: But every Elder in the Lords House is a Ruling-Elder because the power and exercise of rule and Government belongs to every Elder though some of them upon speciall occasions be called to a more eminent Exercise of it than others.

## CH A P. I I.

### *Of the Institution of Ruling-Elders.*

*The 2. book  
of Discip.  
Ch. 6. sect. 2.*

**T**HE Institution of the Office of Ruling-Elder, is divine; it is not an ordinance of man, but of God, The Lord Jesus, upon whose shoulder the Government is, and who is faithfull in all his house, hath in his Eternal wisdom though fit to appoint such an Officer in his House, for the right and orderly Governing thereof. It is true, that by the sloth, or rather by the pride of Teach-

es,

but ers, whilst they alone would seem to be somewhat, and by the policy of Satan, and inadvertance of the Church, these Officers were for many Ages together, out of use in the Christian Church. But certain it is, that both the Jewish Synagogue, and after, the Christian Church had *Seniores*, or Elders, without whose counsel nothing was done in the Church; That the Jewish Church had such appears from 2. *Chro.* 19. 8. *Jer.* 29. 1. *Mat.* 16. 21. 22. 23. 26 57. 59.

*Act.* 4. 5. And

that the Christian Church also had them in the primitive & purest times thereof, appears from the testimony of ancient Writers, as may be found by these who will take pains to search into these things, But we have a more sure word for the Divine Institution of

*Ambros.* Com; on 1. *Tim.* 5. 1. *Tert.* in his 34. *Ch.* of *Apol.* *Basil.* *Mag.* Com. on 1 *say* 3. 2. *Hier.* on that same place. *Aug.* *Ep.* 137. *Greg.* *con. Cels.* lib. 3. *Aug.* 1. 3. *contra Crescen.* *Cap.* 56.

C

Elders

Elders in the Christian Church, then any testimony of man, to wit, the Testimony of God, in the Scriptures of the New Testament. The first place of Scripture is Rom. 12. 6, 7. 8. *Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophesie, let us prophesie, according to the proportion of faith, or Ministry, let us wait on our Ministering, or he that teacheth, on teaching, or he that exhorteth on exhortation; he that gives, let him do it with simplicity: he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.* In which Text, the Apostle doth first comprehend all the severall kinde of ordinary standing Officers in the Church of God, under two general Heads, to wit, Prophecie, whereby is meant the ordinary facultie of right understanding and expounding the Scriptures, and Ministry, under which is comprehended all other Church Officers and employments: To each of these the Apostle addeth their general duties,

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duties, to wit that he who prophesieth, should do it, according to the proportion of faith, *i.e.* according to the measure, of the measure of knowledge of the word of faith, that he hath received of God; And he that Ministers, let him wait on his ministring, *i.e.* let him not do it negligently or slothfully, but faithfully and diligently. Then he sub-divides these two Generals, into the speciall Offices contained under them; He divides him that prophesieth, into him that teacheth, and him that exhorteth, or into the Doctor, to whom the word of teaching or Instruction belongs, and the Pastor, to whom the Word of Exhortation is competent. Under him that ministreth, he comprehends, first him that giveth, by whom is meant the Deacon, who is appointed for the supply of the poor. Secondly, him that ruleth, by whom can be meant no other then the ruling elder, seing an ordinary ruling Officer in the Church, who

is different from the pastor and Teacher is here spoken of by the Apostle.

The second place of Scripture that proves the Office of Ruling-Elders is 1 Cor. 12. 28. *And God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondly Prophets, thirdly Teachers, afterward miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, kinds of tongues.* Some of the Bibles of the late English Translation read *helps in governments*, but cross to the Text in the first Language, that bears *helps, governments*, as two distinct things, and therefore in other Editions of that Translation, this is helped. In this Text the Apostle reckons several Officers of the Church, some extraordinary, which were to continue but for a season, such as Apostles, Prophets, Powers or Miracles, gistes of healing, kinds of tongues: Some Ordinary, which were to continue in the Church to the end of the World, and these are Teachers, or the ordinary Church-Officers, who are exercised in the Word: *Helps, b.e. the Deacons,*



Deacons, who are appointed for the help and relief of the poor; and Government, *b.e.* the Governing and Ruling Elders; for it is clear from the words, that the Apostle by Governments, doth mean a Church Officer, whom God hath set in his Church, for Ruling and Governing thereof, now this cannot be any other of the Church Officers, for these he hath named besides, and therefore it remains that it is the Ruling-Elder.

The third place of Scripture is 1 Tim. 5. 17. *Let the Elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour. specially they that labour in the word and doctrine.* Which Text doth hold forth and distinguish two sorts of Elders in the Church, to whom the Lord Jesus hath committed the power of Ruling; One sort who do also labour in the Word and Doctrine, to wit, Pastors and Teachers: Another sort who do only Rule; and doing it well, are accounted worthy of double honour; and these are the Ruling Elders

2. *Book of Discipl*  
c. 3. lect. 13, 14, 15.  
16. *Affert: of the go-*  
*vernment of the*  
*Church of Scotland.*  
part 1. c. 1. pag. 11.  
and 17:

of whom we speak.  
From this that the  
Office of the Ruling  
Elder is of Divine  
Institution, we gather  
these conclusions, first,  
that it is not a thing arbitrary and indiffe-  
rent for such to wait upon their charge, yea  
or not, as they please, or as their at-  
tendance may contribute for their own  
or their freinds particular, which is the  
custom of too many Elders; but that  
they are bound in conscience diligently to  
attend and follow the duties thereof,  
whether they be such as they ought, to the  
several Members of the Congregation, or  
the keeping of Session, or Presbytry, and  
other Assemblies of the Church, when  
they are called and desired thereto.

Secondly, that Elders ought to do  
their Office, not formally and hypo-  
critically, for the fashion only, but sin-  
cerely and honestly, as in the sight of  
God, by whom they are called unto this  
holy

holy Calling. and to whom they must render an accompt of their discharge of this great trust.

Thirdly, they ought not to domineer over their fellow Brethren and Elders, but to carry themselves humbly and serviceably, as these who are appointed of the Lord Jesus for ministering unto, and edifying of his Body the Church.

Fourthly that they ought to carry themselves with that authority, holiness, gravity and prudence, that becomes these who are called of God, to bear Rule in his House.

Fifthly, that Elders once lawfully called to the Office, and having gifts from God meet to exercise the same [unless they be removed therefrom, because of miscarriages] are still Elders, though happily in Congregations where many qualified men may be found, some may be permittted for a time to surcease from the exercise

2. Book of  
Discip. ch. 6.  
sect. 3.

of

of the charge, and others be put in their room, as was among the Levites under the Law, in serving in the Temple by courses.

Sixthly, that people ought to obey such as these who have the rule over them, and to submit themselves, because they wait for their foules, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, Heb. 13. 17. Yea, they would know them as these who are over them in the Lord, and do admonish them, and esteem them very highly in love for their works sake, 1. Thes. 5. 12. 13.

### C H A P. III.

*Of the Vocation, or Calling of Ruling Elders.*

**A**S no man is to intrude in any im-  
 2. Book of Dis. cap. 3. ployment without a lawful  
 Calling so much less ought  
 any man to intrude himself without a Call-  
 2. Book of dis. cap. 3. ing into any sacred Functi-  
 in the House of God, Heb.  
 5. 4. Therefore before  
 any

any take upon him to exercise the Office of Ruling Elder, he ought to be lawfully called thereunto. This Calling is inward or outward; the inward Calling is the Testimony of a good Conscience, concerning some measure of ability and gifts for the Charge, and a sincere, and honest inclination and purpose to imploy these gifts, for the honour of God, the advancement of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the good of souls.

The outward Calling is to be after the some manner with that of other Church-officers, and it stands in their Election, and in the tryal of their carriage, gifts, and admission to the Charge. The Election is to be made by the Congregation wherein they are to bear charge, *Acts.*

6. 3. 5. and 14. 23.

That it may be gone about in the more orderly way, it is fit that a nomination be made by the Minister

*1 Book of as esp:  
8. head touching  
the Election of  
Elders and Dea-  
cons*

and

and Eldership of the Congregation of the persons fittest; and best qualified for the employment, and that the names of the persons nominated by them, be publickly intimated to the Congregation and they desired, in case of their not being satisfied, as having exception, or knowing others better qualified, to represent the same to the Minister and Eldership. If there be no Eldership in the Congregation, a nomination may be made either by the Presbytry, or by the most judicious and godly Members of the Congregation; particular masters of Families, together with the Minister, or one or more Ministers of the Presbytery, in case of the Congregations want of a Minister.

The trial is to be by the Minister and Eldership of the Congregation, or in case of the want of these, by the Presbytry: And they are to be tryed both in regard of their conversation, that it be blameless and holy, and also in regard

*1 Book of discipline 8. head*

gard of their knowledge and experience in the things of God, and of the Affairs of his Houle, and of their ability and prudence for Government; It is true that the trial of Elders in their knowledge and gifts required for their Charge, hath not been much in ule in this Church, it being taken for granted, that conscience would be made of making choise of such as had knowledge, and were able and fit, or that if any ignorant, or not able and fitted, were nominat, that some of the Congregation upon the intimation of their names, would except against them; but by this means it hath come to pass, that many ignorant and unqualified men have been admitted Elders in many Congregations, to the great detriment of Religion, and no small Reproach of our Church: The Apostle 1 Tim. 3. 10. speaking of Deacons, which is the lowest rank of the Officers of the Church, requires that these also first be proved, then let them use the Office of a Deacon, being found

found blameless: And the same reasons and grounds that plead for the tryal of a Minister, pleads also for the tryall of Elders, in a way futable to the qualifications required in them.

*See the manner of Electing and admitting Ministers and Elders, prefixed to the old Psalm Book.*

Their Admission is to be by the Minister of the Congregation, or one appointed by the Presbytery, in the presence of the whole Congregation, with the Preaching of the word, concerning their duty, and with Prayer and Humiliation, concerning the spirit of their Calling to be poured out upon them, and that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in their hands: At which time they are solemnly to engage themselves before the Lord, to be faithful, and diligent, and watchful over the flock committed to their charge, and in all the duties of that holy and honourable imployment; and the people are also to engage themselves to obey them, and



and to submit themselves to them in the Lord, and to honour them, and highly to esteem them in love for their works sake.

CHAP. IV.

*Of the Duties of a Ruling Elder.*

**T**He Duties of a Ruling Elder be of two sorts, some that are personal, & relate to his conversation as a Christian; others that are Official, and relate to his Ruling, as an Office-bearer in the House of God. His personal qualifications, or the duties of his conversation, are the same with these which the Apostle requires in

the conversation of a Minister, 1 Tim. 3. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. and 6. 11. Tu. 1. 6, 7, 8. In which Scriptures under the name of *inimicus* or an Overseer, he comprehends all these Office-

1. *Book of Disciplines*  
3. head.  
2. *Book of Discipline*  
chap. 6.

*The manner of*  
*leading ministers*  
*and Elders.*  
7un. Eccles. lib.  
2. ch. 2. ek. 3.

D

ess

ers who have the Oversight and Charge of Souls, and sets down what manner of persons he would have them to be in regard of their conversation and carriage; I shal speak of these things with Application to the Ruling Elder. That the Ruling Elder ought to be of a blameless and Christian Conversation, is above question, but that it may be more distinctly known what the Holy Ghost requires of such in regard of their conversation, I shall from these Scriptures shew, First, what the Apostle would have them not to be. Secondly, what he would have them to be. The things of the first sort are these: 1. A Ruling Elder must not be given to Wine, they must not be lovers nor followers of strong drink, nor debord in riot and excess, nor tittle away time in Ale-houses and Taverns. 2. He must not be a striker nor a brawler, nor given to quarreling and contentions. 3. He must not be covetous, nor greedy of filthy lucre; for the love of money is the root of  
all

all evil, which while some covet after, they erre from the faith, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows. 4. He must not be a novice; or one newly come to the faith, lest he be puffed up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the Devil, the spirits of Novices are not yet well ballasted nor brought low enough by frequent exercises of the Crosse, and to come to be more easily puffed up, therefore there is need that he be an exercised Souldier of Jesus Christ, and one who by Experience is taught to know the wiles of the Devil, & is able to endure hardness. 5. He must not be self-willed, adhering pertinaciously, and without reason to his own judgment, and refusing to hearken to the judgment of his Brethren, though sound and wholesome. 6. He must not be soon angry, whether upon real or conceived causes of provocation.

The things of the second sort be these; 1. He must be blameless. *i.e.* One who walks without offence towards God and

men, 2. If married, he must be the husband of one Wife; such a one who shuns all unlawful lusts, satisfying himself with, and keeping himself within the bounds of the Remedy provided of God. 3. He must be vigilant, watchfull over his own soul, that no temptation prevail upon him, watchful unto every good duty, and to take hold of every opportunity of well-doing. 4. He must be sober, and temperat, of a sound and humble minde, moderating his own appetite and affections, and satisfiying himself with a moderat use of the Creatures, and of the things of this world. 5. He must be of a good behaviour or modest, of a grave and staid, yet of an affable and courteous carriage, neither light and vain, to the loosning of his Authority, and rendring himself contemptible, nor sullen, and self-pleasing, to the discouraging and scaring away of the flock, by his needless distance and austerity. 6. Given to hospitality, ready to receive strangers to his House,

House, especially the poor, and those who are of the Household of Faith. 7, *Apt to teach, b. e.* A man of knowledge, and able to instruct others; one who hath a ready and willing mind to teach others, which is not so meant, as if it were requisite for the Ruling Elder to be endued with the Gifts of Exhortation and instruction competent to the Pastor and Teacher. or that he may and ought to imploy himself therein, but of that fitness and ability to Teach that is competent to his Calling, which he must be ready and willing to exercise so far as belongs thereto. 8. Moderate, in the first Language, *Enimvero* Rendered patient. 1 *Tim. 3.* Not rigorous nor exacting the height of the Law in his dealing, but in his own particular of a condescending nature, and remitting something of strict justice. 9, Patient, one who without wearying, waits on his duty notwithstanding of difficulties, and doth bear the delays, untractableness, and injuries

juries of others, 10. One who rules well his own house, having his Children in subjection with all gravity, to which the Apostle adds this reason, *if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God.* 1 Tim. 3. 5. The Church of God is of a larger extent than one Family. and the duties to be performed in it, be of greater eminency and difficulty, and require more skill, wisdom, and courage, than these that are to be performed in a Family. The ruling well of his own house, doth import not only ability for doing of it, but also that he make conscience of & actually perform these duties that are required for the right & well ordering of a Christian Family, to teach & instruct his Children, & Servants in the knowledge of God, to take care of their sanctifying the Lord's day, of their profiting in Godliness, of their seeking of God, & of their ordering their conversation aright, to read the Scriptures, sing Psalms, pray in the Family,

Family, and to Exhort, admonish, rebuke and comfort all that are of his household, as their condition doth require; for if these duties ly upon all Masters of Families who profess the Gospel, then in a special way upon Elders, who are appointed to stir up, and go before others in the performance thereof. 11. A lover of good men, one whose soul cleaves to those who fear God, having such in estimation above all others, cherishing them, and conversing ordinarily and familiarly with them. 12. He must be just, one who is straight and upright in all his dealings among men, deceiving no man, defrauding no man, withholding nothing from any man that is due to him, but giving to every man his own. 13. Holy, carefull to express the life of Religion, and power of Goodliness in all his conversation. 14. He must be one who holds fast the faithfull Word that he hath been taught, one who is stable in the Faith, holding fast the truth of God without

without wavering or turning aside to error. Lastly, he must be one who hath a good report of these who are without least he fall into reproach and snare of the devil, *b. e.* he must be such a one, whose blameless conversation, and sober and Christian walking doth extort a testimony even from these who know not God, and who doth by well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, that if any speak evil of him as of an evildoer, they may be ashamed who speak falsely against his good conversation in Christ. The Apostle comprehends all these summarily in two sentences, *1 Tim. 4. 12.* Be thou an example of the Believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity, *1 Tim. 6. 11.* But thou O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.



A Treatise of

CHAP. V.

Of the duties of their Calling  
which are more private.

**T**He duties of their  
Calling are these  
that belong to their  
watching over, and rul-  
ing of the flock, and  
they be of two sorts; some that they are  
to perform by themselves alone, and so  
may be called *More*  
*privat duties*; others  
that they are to perform  
jointly with the rest of  
the Over-seers of the  
House of God, and  
may be called *more*  
*publick*. The duties of  
their Calling that be  
more private, are all  
these that private Christians are bound to  
perform each of them unto another by the  
Law

1 Book of discip.  
8. head.  
2 Book discip.  
6. chap

After. of the Go-  
vernment of the  
Church of Scot-  
land. 3 part. ch  
2 1 part p 15

Jun Eccles lib. 2.  
cap 3 p 107

### *Ruling Elders.*

Law of charity and love, and these  
the first; to instruct one another,  
*Joh. 4. 29. Acts 18. 26.* Secondly, to  
exhort and stir up one another, to provoke  
unto love and good works. *Heb. 10. 24, 25*  
Thirdly, to admonish and rebuke one an-  
other, *Levit. 19. 17.* First, privately, and  
if they will not hearken, then before  
Witnesses, and if yet they will not hear-  
ken, then to tell the Church, and if  
they will not hear the Church,  
then let them be unto us as  
Heathens and Publicans, *Math. 18.*  
*15. 16. 17.* Fourthly, to comfort the afflict-  
ed, and support the weak, *1. Thess. 5.*  
*11.* Fifthly, to restore those who are fal-  
len, *Gal. 6. 1.* Sixthly; To reconcile  
these who are at variance, *Math. 5. 9.*  
Seventhly, To pray one for another,  
*Jude 20.* Eighthly, To visit the sick, and  
those who are in bonds and distress, *Math.*  
*25. 36.* All these duties Elders are to  
perform to the several Members of the  
Congregation, by vertue of their Call-  
ing

ing, The Scriptures do expressly mention  
 some of them, as incumbent unto them,  
 to wit, *admonishing these over whom God*  
*hath set them,* 1 Thess. 5. 12. *visiting and*  
*praying over the sick,* Jam. 5. 14. *feeding*  
*the flock by Instruction, Exhortation,*  
*Rebuke and Comfort, in such a way as*  
*is competent to their station,* Act 20. 28.  
 The rest we may warrantably gather by  
 analogie and proportion from these; If  
 private Christians be obliged thereto,  
 much more are Christian Elders, who  
 have the charge of Souls, in a special  
 way obliged thereto. These things are  
 well expressed in the sixth Chap. of the  
 second Book of Discipline. As the Past-  
 ors and Doctors (*say they*)  
 should be diligent in teach- 2. Book of Dis-  
 ing and sowing the seed cip. 6. ch  
 of the Word; so the Elders  
 should be careful in seeking of the fruit  
 of the same of the People. It appertains  
 to them to assist the Pastor, in Examin-  
 ation of them that come to the Lords  
 Table,

Table, *Item* in visiting the sick, they should cause the Acts of the Assemblies as well particular as general, to be put in execution carefully; they should be diligent to admonish all men of their duty, according to the rule of the Evangel; things that they cannot correct by privat admonition, they should bring to the Eldership.

From what hath been said concerning these duties of Ruling Elders these three things follow; First, that they ought to be men of such ability, as are in some measure able to instruct, exhort admonish, rebuke, comfort, pray, and do these duties now mentioned. Secondly, That it is needful for them, not only to have some measure of ability for these things, but also to have some measure of dexterity, wisdom, experience, tenderness in following the same. Thirdly that they be well acquainted with the condition of the Congregation, and the members thereof, and therefore be careful to observe

serve their carriage, and frequently to visit and take inspection of families, that they may instruct the ignorant, exhort the negligent, admonish the slothful, and rebuke those who walk disorderly, comfort the afflicted, establish those who waver, visit the sick, encourage these who do well, and see piety and godliness promoted in Families, and every one edifying another in love, walking in the fear of the Lord, and comfort of the Holy Ghost.

## CHAP. VI.

*Of these duties which are more publick, and which they are to perform joynly with others.*

**T**HE duties of Elders which are more publick, & which they are to perform joynly with others, are these which ly upon them in the As-

1 Book of disc.

8. head

2 Book 6 ch

The office and duties of Elders prefixed to the

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semblies

semblies or Courts of the Church, which are made up of Preaching Elders, Teaching Elders, and Ruling Elders: These Assemblies are in our Church of four sorts; either they are of the Elders of particular Congregations, which is the Church Session, or of the Elders of more Congregations than one lying near together, which is the Presbyterie, or of the Elders of more Presbyteries than one, which is the Provincial, Synod or of the Elders Commissioners from all the Presbyteries in the Land, which is the General or National Assembly: To these we may adde a fifth sort, to wit, that which is made up of Elders, from all or diverse Nations professing the Faith of Jesus Christ.

Whilst we speak of Elders, of which the Assemblies of the Church are made up, we mean all sorts of Elders: Ministers, Doctors, and Ruling Elders. It is true, that in the Congregations of our Church, because of the want of maintenance,

tenance, there be few, or no Doctors, or teaching Elders distinct from Pastors or Ministers, who perform the duties both of the Preaching Elder, and of the Teaching Elder, only in the schools of Divinity are such. In all Assemblies of the Church, 2 Book of Discipline ch 6 and chap 7 Ruling Elders being there, to rightly called, have power to sit write, debate, vote, and conclude in all matters that are handled therein, *Acts* 15. 2. and 6. 22, 23. The things which be handled in the Assemblies of the Church, be either matters of Faith, 1 Book of Discipline ch 7 matters of Order. matters of Discipline, or that which concerneth the sending of Church-Officers, according to which they have a fourfold power. 1. That which is called *Dogmatick*, whereby they judge of Truth and Errour, in points of Doctrine, according to the Word of God only. 2. That which is called *Dialectick*, by

which they discern and judge of the circumstances of these things that belong to the worship of God, as Times, Places, Persons, and all such particulars in Ecclesiastick Affairs as are not determined in the Word, according to the general Rules thereof, concerning order and decency, avoiding of scandal, doing all to the glory of God; and to the edifying of the Church. 3. That which is *Crisis* or *Corrective*, by which Censures are exercised upon the scandalous, and obstinate, and such as are penitent again admitted to the Ordinances, Fellowship & Society of the Church. 4. That which is called *Exusiasmick*, by virtue of which they send, authorize and give power to Church Officers to serve in the house of God. All these Assemblies are not to exercise all these powers, but to keep themselves within their due bounds, the Inferior leaving these things that are of more common concernment to the Superior; but in all these Powers, Ruling Elders



Elders have a share, and do put forth the same in exercise, according to the measure that belongs to the Assembly where of they are Members, *Acts* 15. 6. 22, 23. Howbeit the execution of some decrees of the Church assemblies; such as the Imposition of hands, the pronouncing the Sentence of excommunication, the receiving of Penitents, the Intimation of the Deposition of Ministers and such like, do belong to Ministers alone.

These being the Duties and Powers of Ruling Elders in the Assemblies of the Church, its requisite that they be induced with such abilities and qualifications as are needful for the exercising thereof; but because all Ruling Elders are not always called to sit in all these Assemblies: But one from every Session sufficeth to the Presbytry and provincial Synods, and a few from every Presbytry, and from greater Congregations, or Burghs therein, to the General Assembly, as also a few from the whole Church through-

out the Land, to a more universal Assembly; Therefore, though it is to be wished and endeavoured, that all Elders may have due qualifications for all these things, and though special care is to be taken every where to choose the most qualified, yet in particular Congregations men may be chosen Elders who have not such a measure of all these qualifications; they being otherwise men of a blameless and Christian Conversation, and having such a measure of knowledge, and prudence, as is fit for Governing that Congregation, and judging of the things that are handled in the Session thereof, which for the most part are matters of scandal, and trying and admitting of Penitents; but if there be any who are not of a blameless and Christian conversation, and have not some measure of these qualifications required by the Word of God in a Ruling Elder, no Congregation ought to choise any such nor any Session or Presbytry to  
admitt

admitt them to the charge, for it is not seemly that the servants of corruption should have authority to judge in the Kirk of God, and if any such have been admitted, they are to endeavour the removal of them, as they would not partake of their sin, and be found guilty before the Lord of the blood of souls, which cannot but suffer prejudice through negligence or ill guiding of such men.

## CHAP. VII.

*Of the Duty of Elders in censuring scandals and scandalous persons, and receiving of penitents.*

**B**Ecause the Government and Duty of Elders in Congregations, lyes for most part in censuring scandals and scandalous persons, and trying and admitting of penitents; Therefore it is fit to speak somewhat of their right way of follow,

following their Duty in these things. 1.

1 Book of Discip  
concerning Persons  
subject to discipline

2 Book of Discip  
ch 1 and 7

For the Persons about whom their censures are to be exercised, it is all the Members of the Congregation indifferently and impartially, without respect of persons. the rich as well as the poor, the high as well as the low, their friends, kinsmen, alliance, neighbours and acquaintance, as well as others. 74. 2. sharply reproveth these who have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord of glory with respect of persons, by preferring the rich to the poor; and Solomon sayes that *divers weights, and divers measures are an abomination to the Lord*, must it not then be worthy of rebuke to have the censures of our Lord Jesus with respect of persons, and to weigh the rich and the poor, the high and the low in divers balances, by taking notice of the one, and passing by the other. 2. it is incumbent to them to exercise their power,

power, not only over the people of the Congregation, but also

over these of their own

number, as all Christi-

ans, so they in a peci-

al way who are yoke-

fellowes in the work of

the Lord ought to con-

sider and admonish one another, and if

any of them be found negligent, or in-

sufficient, or doe in any thing miscarry,

to the offence of the Gospel, and blam-

ing of the eldership, he is to be censured

by the Minister, or Ministers, and the

rest of the Elders, as the degree of his

offence doth require, the Apostle Paul,

Acts 20. 28. gives charge to all Elders

to take heed to themselves, as well as to

the flock over which the Holy Ghost

hath made them overseers 3. As all

sorts of scandalous persons, whether in

the Congregation or amongst them-

selves: so all sorts of scandals, and of-

fences are to be taken notice of by them;

The

1 Book of Discip-

8 head

The weekly Assen-

of Ministers, elders

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fixed to the old Ps-

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The Apostle 2 Thes. 3. 6. commands that *we withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly*, and amongst disorderly walkers, he doth *vers. 11.* reckon *idle persons*, who doe not work at all, but are busie bodies; intimating to us, that even these scandals and disorders, which are by many little taken notice of, and lookt upon as no faults, ought to be taken notice of by the Church, that all her members may walk honestly, and as it becomes the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Acts of our Church doth appoint, that whatsoever it be that might spot that Christian Congregation, ought not to escape either admonition or censures: So in the order of Ecclesiastick Discipline, 1557. Two great neglects there be that by ignorance or custom have crept in among Elders in many Congregations. 1. That they do not take notice of the omission of Duties as well as the commission of faults; as for instance, If there be any member of the Congregation who lives idly,

idly, and waits not upon his Calling, who is not given to Prayer, who is not charitable to the Poor, who waits not upon the publick Ordinances, if there be any Master of a Family, who prays not in his family, who does not bring up his Children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; or 2. That they do not take notice of the Commission of faults, and scandals of all sorts, but of some few only; such as fornication, adultery, and profaning of the Lords Day, and suffering many others, such as tipling, drunkenness, filthy communication, lying, cursing, swearing, oppression, reproaching of Piety, and Godliness, &c. to pass without observation 4. Elders are to take heed, that they bring in no civil questions and Debates before the Assemblies of the Church, and that they do not use nor inflict any civil mulct, or punishment, upon persons convicted of

1 book of Discip.  
chap 7 sect 6

of scandal, these being proper to the Civil Magistrat; The Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the Censures thereof being Spritual, and not of this world *John 18.*

*The Order of Ecclesiastick Discipline appointed by the Assembly 1567 And in the Order of Excommunication commanded to be Printed by the Assembly 1571*

36. 5. In the taking notice of offences. they are to observe this Order: If the Offence be private, and known to but a few, then are they in the first place to admonish the offender privately, and if he hearken to the admonition and amend, it needs go no further, nor be dilated to the Church; If he do not harken nor amend, then is the Elder to take with him some of his Brethren, and to admonish the offender before witnesses, and if he hearken the Church needs not be acquainted therewith, but if he despise this second admonition, then is he to be dilated by the Elder to the Church, that he may be called before the Session, and convicted and



and censured by them; This is the Order Commanded and perscribed by Jesus-Christ, *Mat. 18 15, 16. 17* if the offence be Publick and open, then *2 Book of Discipline Ch 6 sect 12* is the offender without such previous admonition to be dilated to the Session, that according to the Apostles Rule, *1 Tim. 5. 20. They that sin* ( meaning openly ) *may be rebuked before all, that others may fear.*

6. In these dilations, they are to take heed that they do not, upon every rumor or jealousie, or suspicion, bring men to be questioned Publickly as scandalous walkers, but first to be carefull to make diligent and prudent enquiry about the truth of the matter, and to see if it can be proven by witnesses, or that the scandall thereof be common and flagrant, or attended with pregnant likely-hoods, and presumptions of truth, before they bring it in publick. that so it may appear to the Congregation, and to the party themselves,

selves, that they are not questioned and challenged without cause.

In the matter of dilation and censure, they are in the fear of God, and in the simplicity and sincerity of their hearts, to take heed that fear or favour, or sollicitations, or threatnings, or gifts, or bribes, make them not passe by, or wink at the fault of any, and that passion, or malice, or privat quarrels, and particulars make them not to dilate, or rip up, or censure the miscarriage of any, and that they carry withall tenderneffe and compassion, and moderation, towards the offender, that they may approve themselves to his conscience; that nothing puts them one to dilate him, and proceed against him, but the conscience of duty, and a desire to gain his soul, and to purge the Church of scandals, *Gal. 6. 1. 2 Cor. 4. 2.* Its a high provocation before the Lord, for a Church-Officer to abuse the power given him of God, for edifying his body the Church, unto the satisfying

satisfying his own passions and corrupt affections.

8: They are to take heed that they do not use the Centures of the Church as a bodily punishment or penance to satisfie for sin, but a spirital medicine, for humbling and gaining of the soul; all Church censures even Excommunication it self, which is the most terrible and destroying like censure, being ordained of God for this end, 1 Cor. 5. The Apostle commands to *deliver the incestuous person to Satan*, not that he may satisfie for his sin, but that the *spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ*. The word Satisfaction may admit of a tolerable construction in Church-censures, in order to the removing of the scandal before men; but this being so much abused in the popish Church, and the hearts of men, being so prone to turn true Gospel repentance, to a meer legal penance, and to conceive, that by meer outward submission and obedience to

the censures of the Church, that the guilt of their sin is done away before God, Therefore Elders would carefully shun every thing that may give occasion to the fostering this pernicious opinion, and take pains to instruct offenders in the true nature and ends of the censures of the Kirk. 9. A great part of Elders work, is to travel and take pains with scandalous persons who are now convict, *The form & order of publick repentance prefixed to the old Ps-* to bring them to repentance by seasonable and frequent conference, instructing, exhorting and admonishing them untill they perceive some measure of true and earnest humiliation wrought in them for their sin, and them fitted to evidence and declare the same in publick before the Congregation. that so the scandal may be removed.

10. They are not to desire or appoint any to profess repentance before the Congregation, untill the signs of repentance

penitance appear in them. The Incestuous *Corinthian* sorrowed exceedingly before the Apostle did any thing concerning the receiving of him. And the Discipline of our Church appoints Ministers and Elders sharply to examine these who offer themselves to repentance, what fear and terror they have of Gods judgements, what hatred of sin, and sorrow for the same, and what sense and feeling they have of Gods mercies; In which if they be ignorant, they ought diligently to be instructed; for it is (say they) but a mocking to put such to publick repentance, who neither understand what sin is, what repentance is, what grace is, nor by whom Gods mercies and favours are purchased? And that after he is instructed in these things, and brought to have some taste of Gods judgements, especially of his mercies in Jesus Christ, he may be presented before the publick Church; These things are set down in the form and order of

Publick Repentance, appointed by the Assembly 1567.

Lastly, when the signs and evidences of true and unfeigned Repentance do appear in these who have offended, Elders would shew themselves ready & willing to receive them with all tenderness and compassion, and to forgive and comfort them, and confirm their love towards them, 3. Cor. 2. 7, 8.

1 Book of disciplin  
ch 6 sect 4

The number of Elders in every Congregation cannot be well limited or determined, but it is to be more or less, according to the quantity of the Congregation, and necessities and condition of the people, and as men qualified and fit for the Charge can be found. It hath been an evil custome in some Congregations, that rather then they would want any of their wonted number, they would choose unqualified men, and that in several Congregations, the Office of Elder hath been given to those of the richer and

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and higher sort, as due to such (though happily of no experience in the things of Jesus Christ, and in many things of an un-  
render and blame-worthy conversation) because of their condition in the world, or conceiving that their secular power and credit was the best means to promote the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and men qualified with Knowledge and experience in the things pertaining to souls, and of a Christian and godly carriage have been passed by, because of a mean condition in the World. Better it is that the number be few, before we choose the ignorant and scandalous; and that they be of a low degree, If godly, than of a high degree, if otherwayes That Elders may the more conveniently discharge their duty; It is convenient that the Con-  
gregation be divided in-  
to so many parts. and that some competent part be assigned to the more peculiar care and inspection of every Elders;

*Acts of the 1st*  
1646

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yet so, as he neglect not to take heed to all the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him an over-seeer.

## CHAP. I.

### of Deacons.

#### Of their Names.

**T**Hat we may also understand what doth belong unto Deacons, we shall speak of them shortly, after the same order. 1. Of their Name. 2. Of their Institution. 3. Of their Calling. 4. Of their duty and qualification. The word Deacon, largely taken signifies any servant or Minister, *Matth. 23. 11.* Therefore in the New Testament, it doth sometimes comprehend all Church-Officers, even the Apostles themselves, *1 Cor. 3. 5.* Because every Church-Officer is appointed of God, for perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry *his ἑργον διακονίας,* and

*1 Book of discip-  
chap 8*



head and edifying the Body of  
 the Christ. when we speak of Deacons *Eph 4 12*  
 in the Kirk, it is not taken  
 in this large sense, for any Church-Officer  
 of whatsoever sort, but for  
 a certain kind of Church Officers distinct from Past- *1 Book of Discipline ch 8*  
 ors, Teachers and Elders,  
 to whom the collection and distri-  
 bution of the Goods of the Church  
 doth belong, for the supply of the neces-  
 sities of the poor.

## CHAP. II.

*Of the Institution of Deacons.*

THE Institution of the Office of Deacon  
 in the Church of Christ, is Divine; it's  
 a special Ordinance and Appointment of  
 Jesus Christ, that there should be Dea-  
 cons in his House; *Act. 6. 3.* The Apo-  
 stle gives command to the Disciples to  
 choose out among themselves men of  
 honest report, full of the Holy Ghost,  
 and of Wisdom, whom they might ap-  
 point

point over the business of the poor, which was accordingly done, as may be seen in the 5. and 6. verses of that Chapter: Neither was this a temporary institution upon this particular occasion, for the Church of Jerusalem only, but for all the Churches of Christ to the end of the world; Therefore the Apostle Paul in several of his Epistles to the Churches, doth mention them, *Rom. 12. 8.* He exhorteth *him that gives or imparts.* (*b. e.* the Deacon, to whom the care of giving and distributing is committed) to do it with simplicity, *1. Cor. 12. 28.* he reckons *helps.* (*b. e.* Deacons who are appointed for helping the poor) among these Officers whom God hath set in his Church; and writing to the *Philippians*, he directs His Epistle to all the Saints in Christ, with the Bishops or Overseers, under whom he comprehends Ministers, Teachers and *aiders*) and to the Deacons, *1. Tim.* wherein

*3 Book of Discipline 8 chap.*

wherein he gives Rules concerning the qualification and carriage of all Church-officers, he treats of the Deacon at large, chap. 3. 8, 9, 10, 11. 12, 13. From the Divine institution of Deacons, we gather 1. That the Deacon is a distinct Officer from the Elder; it is a defect and fault in some Congregati-  
*1 Book of Dis- ch 2 p 74*  
ons, that they put no difference betwixt those two, but so confounds and mingles them together, as if they were both one, either appointing none for the Office of Deacon, but leaving that charge also upon the Elders, or else giving the Deacons the same power and employment with the Elders. It's true, whatsoever the Deacon may do by vertue of his Office, that same may be done by an Elder, as whatsoever is done by an Elder, may be done by a Minister: because the higher and more eminent officers in the Church, doth include the Powers of the lower. It's also true, that the Deacons

1 Book of Dis-  
cipline p. 57.

Deacons may assist in judgment with the Minister and Elders, and be helping to them in these things that concern the oversight of the Congregations, by information and advice; Yet it is necessary that Congregations should so far regard the Ordinances, and reverence the Wisdom of God, in appointing these Officers, as to have both Elders and Deacons and to preserve them distinct in their actions and operations, not giving to the Deacons, or suffering him to assume the Elders office. 2. That Deacons are not to count light of this employment, or any others to esteem lightly of them, because they are called thereunto, and do exercise the same; but that they themselves, and all others ought to look upon it as one of these holy and honourable employments, which the wisdom of God hath thought fit to appoint in his house, for supplying the necessities of the Saints. The Lord Jesus himself did not disdain  
to

to wash his Disciples feet; Angels are all  
of them ministring Spirits, sent forth  
to minister for their sakes who are ap-  
pointed to be heirs of Salvation; why  
then should any think it below them to  
serve the Church of Christ, and to mi-  
nister to the Saints in this Imployment?

1. *1. Tim. 3. 13.*

CHAP. III.

*Of the Calling of Deacons*

**N**One is to step into  
this Office but he *2. Book of Discip.  
chap. 8*  
that is lawfully called  
thereto; Unto their Call-  
ing its needful, Firſt, That they have  
abilities and gifts fit for the charge, to-  
gether with an honest purpose of heart to  
serve the Lord faithfully in the discharge  
of the same, by seeking his honour and  
the good of the Church. 2. That they  
be chosen by the Congregation in  
which they are to serve, which choice is

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to

to be made after the same manner, as that of a Ruling Elder. 3. That tryal be taken by the Minister and Elders, concerning their conversation, that it be blameless and holy: And concerning their gifts, that they have that tenderness, discretion, dexterity and prudence, that is fit for that imployment, and that they be admitted to their Charge with Prayer and Supplication, and opening of the word concerning their duty publickly in the Congregation, where they are solemnly to engage themselves to be faithful in the trust committed to them of God, *Act 6. 3, 5, 6. 1. Tim. 3. 10.*

#### CHAP. IV.

##### *Of their duty.*

##### *First of their Conversation.*

**T**Heir Duty is either that which concerns their Conversation, or their office and calling: for their conversation, the Apostle shews what it must be, *1 Tim. 3. 8. 9. 10, 11, 12.*  
They

r, as They must not be double tongued, nor  
al be lyars, nor dessemblers, nor deceivers, 2.  
con They must not be given to much wine,  
t be nor tiplers, nor drunkards, nor lovers,  
ning nor followers of strong drink. 3 They  
ness, must not be greedy of filthy lucre, nor  
that such as are covetous, and whose hearts  
hey run after the things of the world. 4 They  
ay- must be grave men, of a po'd and  
of stayed carriage, and not of a light and  
ck- vain behaviour. 5. They must be such  
are as hold fast the mystery of Faith in a  
be pure conscience, *b.e.* Who do not only  
of know the Doctrine of the Gospel, but do  
hold fast the Faith thereof without wave-  
ring, and study to have a good consci-  
ence, in walking answerably thereto. 6.  
They must be the husband of one wife,  
such as abstain from all unlawful lusts sa-  
tisfying themselves with the Remedy al-  
lowed of God. 7. They must be such as  
rule their own houses and their chil-  
dren well, such as command and instruct  
their children and household to keep the

way of the Lord, going before them in the practice of piety and godliness, and all holy and religious duties.

## CHAP. V.

### *Of the Duties of their Calling.*

*2. Book of Discipline chap 8.*

**T**He Duties that Deacons are bound to perform in their calling, may be reduced to these heads: 1. That they be careful to take exact notice of such as are poor in the Congregation, and have not wherewith to maintain themselves 2. That they be careful from time to time to collect and receive from the several Members of the Congregation, and strangers that come among them; what the Lord shall incline their hearts to give for a supply of the necessities of the poor; and in a seasonable and Christian way, to stir up and exhort to Charity and liberality, that the more may be given, 3. That what



in what is received and collected by them  
and be faithfully delivered, that it may be  
put in the Treasury of the Congregation.

4. That they do timouſly make known  
the ſeveral conditions and neceſſities of  
the ſeveral poor within the Congregation,  
to the Church Seſſion, that proviſion may  
be appointed accordingly for each of  
them, that ſo the Poor may not be put  
to begging, to the grief of their ſpirits,  
and reproach of the Goſpel. 5. That  
they be careful honeſtly and in ſimplicity,  
without reſpect of perſons, to diſtribute  
and deliver to the poor what is appointed  
for ſupply of their neceſſities; and if they  
be Orphans, and young ones, or ſuch who  
have no knowledge or underſtanding,  
nor ability to diſpoſe and order the things  
that concerns their food and rayment:  
That the Deacons honeſtly imploy and  
beſtow what is given for their uſe, that  
they may be ſupplied in theſe things. 6.  
That they be careful that what belongs  
to the poor be not dilapidated, nor ap-  
plyed

plyed to any other use; and if that there be any stock in the Church Treasure, it be improved to the best advantage, for the benefit and use of the poor; Yet so that the poor be rather alwayes supplied, than the Money treasured up for a vain shew. That they be caretul to take notice of them who are sick, that they may acquaint the Ministers and Elders therewith, for visiting of them; and if that they be poor, their necessities may be supplied.

That Deacons may the more conveniently discharge their Duty, its fit that some part of the Congregation be assigned to every one of them for the better inspection of the poor thereof, and that the Diets of collecting for the poor be divided amongst them.

The number of Deacons in every Congregation is to be according to the proportion of the Congregation, and of the poor therein; and though there be no necessity of an equal number of Elders and Deacons, yet it is fit that each Elder have some

then some Deacon to be assisting to him in the  
re. bounds of which he hath more peculiar  
or the inspection, that so both the one and the  
that other may discharge their duty, with  
that the greater facility to themselves, and  
y. 7 with the greater benefit and advantage  
here of the Congregation.

*F I N I S.*